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Urban greenways and public ways: realizing public ideas in a fragmented world

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Abstract

How do we make things happen in the public realm? This paper first considers four forces surrounding change and urban fragmentation: technology and the culture of compliance; connections between ecological literacy and sustainability; the uncertain ethics of public life, the relationship between education and place. Decision-making and management models such as "muddling through" and "groping along" are also examined as implementation techniques which others have used. A brief summary of the City of Vancouver context introduces the Urban Landscape Task Force and its report *Greenways • Public Ways*. The mandate was to discover what the public valued in the urban landscape and to recommend ways to manage, protect, and enhance it. After a public process, research and deliberations, the Task Force noted a serious neglect of the public realm and all its attendant issues, and recommended 15 Essential Actions to the City Council. Barriers to implementing these public ideas in the political and bureaucratic climate of a land-poor but landscape-rich city are identified: the culture of conformity and compliance; the lost art of public conversation; political or bureaucratic fear of change and the unknown; lack of a sustainable vision for the city; public service overload; lost identity with public places; visual and ecological illiteracy; participation overkill; a lack of "real" examples. The conclusions are drawn from the Urban Landscape Task Force experience, and six strategies are suggested to implement public ideas: (1) reviving citizenship; (2) building partnerships; (3) making big moves; (4) making small moves and trial offerings; (5) modelling after nature and beauty; (6) educating for community-based literacy.

Keywords: Community governance; Community partnerships; Greenways; Public ideas; Urban landscape

1. Introduction

We are in a time of immense frustration with governance. Every day we are overwhelmed with issues and problems which seem well beyond our control, even our ability to comprehend. We want a logical yet diverse "way of being". This paper describes an exercise in helping people understand complex public ideas through a citizen's task force. (The City of Vancouver has had three "task forces", which in Vancouver parlance are citizen committees charged with a particular topic. The first was the "Clouds of Change", a task force on atmospheric pollution. The second and third are the "Urban Landscape Task Force", on our use of public lands and the subject of this paper, and the "Safer City Task Force", on personal and property security in the city). These ideas are about urban greenways and public ways. The process has indicated the need for poking and prodding, nudging and needling until the ideas are implemented.

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The paper first reviews opinions on forces surrounding change and fragmentation in urban society today. Current literature in areas of policy implementation and management is also briefly reviewed. Then a summary of the City of Vancouver context introduces the Urban Landscape Task Force. The approach of this task force is explained and reviewed in the context of political, public and bureaucratic responses. Barriers to implementing ideas are explored with reference to the Urban Landscape Task Force experience. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the analysis, and six strategies are suggested to implement public urban ideas.

The very expression "implement public urban ideas" indicates two considerations: (1) someone has a public idea relating to urban form, systems, or life; (2) implementation occurs within the policies and systems of governance. The following sections deal first with the forces of change and fragmentation that influence the ideas, and then with approaches to public policy development and implementation.

2. Forces surrounding change and fragmentation

We exist in a society of change and fragmentation. We experience a fragmentation of self, of society and social relations, and certainly of our public realm. This fragmentation at many levels of society has an incredible impact on our public urban landscape and on our public values. Public places, wonderful opportunities for integration and cohesion, are subject to the same fragmentation as afflicts us all. As a result, public places often tend to be neglected and confused. As Arendt explains: "The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic seance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated by anything tangible" (Arendt, 1958, pp. 52–53). For many of us, the table has indeed disappeared and we are desperately seeking its replacement in a new and better form.

Change and fragmentation in the urban realm have been expressed in several contexts: technology and the culture of conformity and compliance (Franklin, 1990); the connection between sustainability and ecological literacy (Orr, 1992); lack of visions of publicness and privateness (Sennett, 1990); the uncertain ethical basis of public life (Friedmann, 1987; Jacobs, 1992); the poor relationship between education and place (Dewey, 1954; Mumford, 1938).

2.1. Technology and the culture of conformity and compliance

Franklin, an experimental physicist and culture critic, makes a distinction between holistic and prescriptive technologies (Franklin, 1990, pp. 18–20). Holistic technologies normally exhibit four characteristics: (1) an element of craft is involved; (2) decisions are made by a single "doer"; (3) the doer is in control of the process through to the end; (4) the product is generally one of a kind. In a holistic technology people may work together, but their work procedure leaves the individual worker in control; this is specialization by product. Prescriptive technologies, on the other hand, link specializations by process. Making something is broken down into various steps, each undertaken by a different person. Such a process is a prescriptive technology, in that the process itself has to be prescribed with enough accuracy so that the steps all fit together. Franklin argues that prescriptive technologies "... constitute a major social invention. In political terms, prescriptive technologies are designs for compliance" (Franklin, 1990, p. 23). Within the prescriptive model, the workforce culture is a system based on external control and internal compliance. Prescriptive technologies have their place in society. An example is interactive information technology, which can broaden accessibility to information and makes learning new ideas fun. However, prescriptive technology ordering, originally confined to the workplace and work process, has migrated to the ordering of social situations.

Prescriptive technologies are not confined to products—they are found in many aspects of governance. Compliantly yielding to others convinces us we have no control or say in what happens to our world. Com-

pliance becomes a block to implementing ideas: the challenge of moving beyond the accepted and the norm.

2.2. Ecological literacy and the meaning of sustainability

Orr, an environmental educator, criticizes technological sustainability, eco-developers and the term "sustainable development" (Orr, 1992, pp. 25–27). Instead he proposes "ecological sustainability", which is described by six major characteristics: (1) the fallibility of humans, which limits our ability to coordinate or comprehend things beyond a certain scale; (2) the important role of the citizen in creating the future; (3) the rooting of ecological sustainability in the folkways and traditions of the past as much as in new knowledge; (4) nature as a model for designing places and economies, not just as a set of constraints; (5) nature as a model for societal systems which influences our decisions about scale and centralization; (6) ecological sustainability as a paradigm based on the concept of interrelatedness as a system of knowledge.

Orr's definition grapples with the messiness of systems, linkages, processes, patterns and context (Orr, pp. 28–38). He presents a strong case for education being our salvation in moving towards ecological sustainability. Ecological sustainability also depends on public participation and necessity for a human and humane approach to decision-making. Orr is also blunt about the necessity to move quickly and surely. His views are an encouraging effort to reconcile the vast and ever-expanding volumes of literature on sustainability in a way which was supported with the work and findings of the Urban Landscape Task Force.

2.3. Visions of publicness and privateness

In about AD 600, Saint Isidore of Seville traced the origins of the Western concepts "urban" and "city" back to different sources: "urbs", the stones of a city which are laid for practical reasons of shelter and warfare, and "civitas", the emotions, rituals and beliefs that characterize a city (Sennett, 1990). Our current urban soul-searching is a quest for our civitas.

Sennett, a sociologist and urban historian, notes that in Isidore's time, the urban fabric was "open-weave"—fields and forest were often within the city. The current movement to encourage nature in the city reflects how many of our present views are influenced by the traditions of past cultures. Another example is how the space in front of the church (the "parvis") was originally protected as sacred but gradually became a place of public rituals, plays and political speeches. Sacred zones and private homes were places of refuge from the secular civitas, which was seen as indistinct, often tumultuous and "a space of moral amnesia" (Sennett, p. 19). Small wonder that our public outside world is often viewed as incomprehensible and even feared today. The spiritual "Inside" was safe, the worldly "Outside" was dangerous.

These dialectics of inside and outside, prospect and refuge, and public and private are rooted in our past and influence the fragmentation we experience. As we find our cities bringing together citizens of Western traditions, Eastern traditions and aboriginal traditions, it is not surprising that our urban rituals, beliefs and emotions are often unclear—and, perhaps, more easily avoided than confronted.

2.4. The ethical basis of public life

There is a need to return to an ethical approach to public life. Why do we protect private rights without a charter of citizenship rights and obligations? We recognize that different people have fundamentally different values (Jacobs, 1992; Allsopp, 1993), but we fail to acknowledge the overriding ethic of responsible public life which should bind us together. However, notwithstanding this ideal, the implementation of urban ideas requires at best a rudimentary acknowledgement of existing norms: "... on the one hand, a public, political system that is responsible for the design and guardianship of the public infrastructure of the city and, on the other hand, a private system that is responsible for supplying private, commercially viable facilities. While these public and private systems are necessarily interactive and symbiotic, they are governed by quite different sets of motives and ambitions which cannot or should not be merged" (Allsopp, 1993, p. 25). Values and beliefs expressed by different people in the city are validated through understanding and clarifying the differences between our public and private systems.

2.5. Education and place

Dewey, educator and advocate for democratic processes, proposed that schools should be embryonic com-

munities that reflect broader societal life. In 1927, Dewey also attacked a barrier to effective education: "The invasion and partial destruction of the life of the [local community] by outside uncontrolled agencies is the immediate source of the instability, disintegration and restlessness which characterize the present epoch" (Orr, 1992, pp. 129–130).

Mumford's regional survey is another example of the connection between education and place. It included an in-depth study of the local environment by members of the community, including children, and was intended to "create habits of thinking across disciplines, promote cooperation, and dissolve distinctions between facts and values, the past and the future, and nature and human society" (Orr, 1992, pp. 128–129). Mumford proposed the survey as a basis for planning and as a vehicle for public participation.

The lack of connecting place and education results in the lack of physical vision for our cities, and a lack of imagination and excitement about what our lives could be like. How can we feel deeply connected to our cities if we do not know them well enough?

3. Public policy implementation

Moving from forces of change and fragmentation, the second consideration of this paper, policy and governance, has been studied in a depth which far surpasses the inquiry into urban issues. Much has been said about how to get things done! Decision-making and management models of interest have friendly names: "muddling through" (Lindblom, 1959); "mixed scanning" (Etzioni, 1967); "groping along" (Altshuler, 1988; Behn, 1988); "adaptive muddling" (De Young and Kaplan, 1988); "evolutionary tinkering" (Sanger and Levin, 1992). These departures from the linear, rationalist model provide useful background for analysing the Urban Landscape Task Force as a study in implementing public ideas.

We frequently perceive crises of governance where nothing seems to get done. Even after public policy is developed, "implementation" by definition does not actually get things done, but merely lays the groundwork as "a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, p. xv); "A study of implementation is a study of change...It is also a study of the micro-structure of political life" (Jenkins, 1978, p. 203). In looking at public policy implementation, relevant considerations include the organization of the players and the approach to decision-making.

Traditional organizational structures for implementation are top-down and bottom-up. Two main factors are cited for effective implementation in the hierarchical top-down approach: (1) the provision of resources; (2) the specificity of instruction. No resources and vague instructions invite no action—or uncontrolled voluntary action. Unfortunately, this model neglects the effects of policy modification or distortion at the hands of policy implementers (Younis and Davidson, 1990, p. 12). In the opposite approach, bottom-up, individuals are credited with increased control; this approach may be equally undesirable in its implied and undemocratic rejection of the authority of policy-makers. Traditionally, therefore, policy implementation has been viewed as a dialectic where "policy makers will make decisions which will attempt to limit the power of other actors; actors will make decisions which will evade the power of decision makers" (Younus and Davidson, p. 12).

However, a middle ground recognizes the weakness of the two organizational models when tested against reality. This third model, a policy–action continuum, focuses on the actions, with more emphasis on issues of power and motivation. Even with this realistic approach, policy-makers can "rig the dice" or "street bureaucrats" (bureaucrats in constant contact with the public) can make their own policies in the process of bargaining. The 1990s are expected to see a major shift of organizational structures to recognize this middle ground (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993).

3.1. Muddling through, groping along and evolutionary tinkering

The decision-making approach is another basic determinant for public policy implementation. The rational, linear or "root" method of decision-making is one option. The incremental or "branch" method is another. Lindblom discusses the incremental method in his often-quoted treatise on the science of "muddling through": "neither revolution, nor drastic policy change, nor even carefully planned big steps are ordinarily possible" (Lindblom, 1979, p. 517). This is not a new idea—even in the post-war euphoria of the

1950s, Lindblom postulated that the linear method, although a neat blueprint for decision-making, is not workable for complex policy questions. Administrators are forced to use the incremental method of successive limited comparisons where value goals and the needed action are not distinct from one another but are closely intertwined. "Means/ends" analysis is often inadequate: the risk is that policy analysis will agree with the "means" without testing options. A succession of comparisons reduces "convenient" reliance on policy theory. The choice is between thinking that you are covering all the bases and consciously knowing you are not doing so: "accidental incompleteness on one hand, and deliberate, designed incompleteness on the other" (Lindblom, 1979, p. 519).

"Muddling through" or the incremental model, however, is not without its critics. It could neglect need for fundamental change and basic societal innovations with its propensity to focus on the short term. An example of this need for principled muddling through may be seen in the "tragedy of the commons" scenario (Hardin, 1977). Common property may be either stewarded or exploited, depending upon the widely held principles of those governing its use. An accumulation of small steps could lead to widespread change—if there are strong principles to guide the way (Etzioni, 1967).

In response to criticisms of plain old muddling through, De Young and Kaplan (1988) suggest a framework they call "adaptive muddling". This framework addresses three aspects of the decision-making process: (1) exploration for good information; (2) stability of the process over time; (3) distributed leadership: "It requires acknowledging a problem (that is, environmental limitations) that tends to be denied. It requires a clear policy to the effect that (a) outcomes matter, (b) these outcomes cannot be known without exploration, (c) this exploration is best done at a small scale, and (d) in order to find solutions in a timely fashion, many such experiments must go on simultaneously" (De Young and Kaplan, 1988, p. 282).

Muddling through at a more detailed implementation and management level has been called "groping along". This strategy validates behaviour which otherwise might have been viewed as eccentric: "Public managers do and should grope along. They need to have a clear sense of mission for their agency. But they will never know precisely how to realize these purposes...he or she must experiment with various initiatives, trying to determine what works and what does not" (Behn, 1988, p. 643).

The idea of groping along supports the manager who is eager to try out new ideas informally or who likes simple and broad strategies which leave tactics to be worked out in an adaptive way as events unfold. There is some sense of the broad goal, but the manager gropes along to get there. Public ideas, then, need to be communicated in a way that helps managers grope towards their implementation. This means they should be articulated simply and broadly, without too much implementation detail which could prove incorrect, depending on the context.

A more directed variation of muddling through is evolutionary tinkering. This management strategy is also based on the idea that a process of trial and error and experiential learning in the field is the most powerful. "Innovation does not spring from systematic policy analysis nor is it generally a revolutionary breakthrough. Innovation more often depends upon evolutionary tinkering with existing practices" (Sanger and Levin, 1992, p. 88).

The innovative manager is often entrepreneurial. She or he likes taking risks and has an opportunistic streak biased towards action. Such managers are rarely fazed by any political or bureaucratic obstacles—they just get on with it.

In summary, the forces of change and fragmentation and our methods of policy implementation and management significantly influence how we make things happen. Our individual responses to fragmentation as it affects our own lives motivate us in different ways.

4. The Vancouver context

The City of Vancouver is a municipality of approximately 450 000 people, which covers 11 615 ha (28 700 acres) at the mouth of the Fraser River on Canada's west coast (see Fig. 1). Approximately 45% of the land area is in the public realm, mostly roads and parks. The most famous open space is Stanley Park, at the tip of the downtown peninsula.

The rapidly growing Greater Vancouver region (1.5 million population) accepts the population of a "good-sized town" (40 000) into the region each year. National and international indicators show the region

Fig. 1. Location map of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

will continue to grow in population. With this growth the need to balance often competing interests also grows. There are a number of important issues that have been identified for the city, including: (1) accommodating growth and density in neighbourhoods; (2) meeting the needs of diverse ethnic populations; (3) achieving equity in access to open space across the city; (4) providing different kinds of public open space; (5) improving safety and security; (6) balancing rights and responsibilities; (7) responding to global and local ecological issues; (8) making regional landscape connections; (9) monitoring our natural ecosystem; (10) planning for transit; (11) managing the scale of change; (12) respecting people through public process; (13) clarifying the private and public realm; (14) gathering better information for co-ordinating planning and management; (15) finding a way to pay for all this (City of Vancouver, 1992a). These issues provide a context for understanding the mandate and role of the Urban Landscape Task Force.

5. The Urban Landscape Task Force: a study in implementing public ideas

Vancouver's Urban Landscape Task Force was initiated by Mayor Gordon Campbell and supported by Vancouver City Council. The mandate was to (1) improve the citizens', politicians' and bureaucrats' understanding of the value of the urban landscape and (2) recommend to City Council how to manage, protect and enhance it. Table 1 outlines the time-frame and performance schedule of this work.

Written with a public audience in mind, *Greenways•Public Ways* includes chapters on urban landscape connections, urban landscape values, Essential Actions, urban landscape themes, and gifts and tools (City of Vancouver, 1992b). The report is intended to be a resource book for continuing discussions on the evolution of Vancouver's urban landscape, with special emphasis on the public realm. Another important purpose is that of a catalyst for action: the report identifies Essential Actions for implementation by the City to promote responsible decisions in the public realm. Last, but not least, the report is intended to inspire community groups in the City to be stewards of the urban landscape.

The focus of the Task Force was the interface of our built and natural environments. The Task Force explored how people connect with nature and how the urban landscape works or does not work as an organizing and vital system in the City. The initial scope of the mandate was expanded in the belief that a broad vision was needed which could include a variety of concerns including the ecological, the cultural and the social aspects in the context of the City as a landscape system.

There were 12 Task Force members: seven citizens, one staff liaison person and four politicians from City Council, Parks Board and School Board. The citizens included a lawyer, a nurse, an environmental biologist, a community activist, an environmental educator–planner, an architect–urban designer and a landscape architect (author and chair). The Task Force met 18 times and members were actively involved in the public process, in the content of *Greenways•Public Ways*, and in formulating its promotion through the political process.

The project's budget was $60 000. This included a modest public process involving a portable display (emphasizing the mapping of the public realm and ecological areas in the city), a 2 day symposium called the City in View, three part-time staff people, and the production and printing of an interim Ideas Paper and the resource book, *Greenways•Public Ways*. The chair and the Task Force members were all volunteers.

Five major themes emerged from the public and research process, meetings with staff and "experts", and task force discussions: greenway connections; truly public places; democratic streets; ecological priority;

Table 1
Urban Landscape Task Force chronology

Date	Description of events
November 1990	Mayor Gordon Campbell announces two task forces, Urban Landscape and Safer City, at his inaugural speech as Mayor Mayor Campbell (G.C.) requests Moura Quayle (M.Q.) to chair the Urban Landscape Task Force (ULTF)
February 1991	G.C. and M.Q. meet to discuss mandate. G.C. states case based on the demise of the city's natural landscape; M.Q. argues that built environment must be considered in tandem
April 1991	Draft mandate from M.Q. to G.C.
August 1991	ULTF meets for first time to discuss mandate and define tasks
September 1991	Mandate approved by City Council
October 1991	ULTF meets on 9 and 30 October
November 1991	ULTF meets on 7 and 20 November
December 1991	ULTF meets on 11 and 16 December (with the Planning Department)
December 1991–January 1992	ULTF meets 38 professional advisors in small groups
January 1992	ULTF meets on 15, 20 and 29 January 2000 Brochures distributed to inform public; over 400 questionnaires distributed; 112 returned ULTF meets Park Board (Planning), Engineering (Streets), School Board staff, and Park Board planning
January–February 1992	M.Q. meets City Engineer; Head, Social Planning; and other various individual staff in Planning and Engineering
February 1992	ULTF meets on 9 and 19 February Invitations to make written submission made to 68 organizations; 17 written statements returned ULTF meets Public Art Committee, Socal Planning Department, Park Board Maintenance Department, Park Board Recreation staff, Greater Vancouver Regional District Technical Advisory Committee, and Planning Department Open house: Oakridge Mall, Hastings Community Centre, Stratcona Community Centre, Champlain Mall
February–March 1992	The City in View: a public symposium on Vancouver's Urban landscape
March 1992	ULTF meets on 4 and 18 March 500 Ideas Papers distributed for comment M.Q. met with Community Association Presidents, representatives from 12 community groups, representatives of 4 community groups, and Thunderbird Community Association
April 1992	Public Meeting at Heritage Hall, 66 attendees ULTF meets on 8, 22 and 29 April ULTF meets several Westside community organizations, and Grandview Community Council
May 1992	Report completed; distributed to Council and public
October 1992	Policy report from City Manager goes to Council
November 1992	Council Meeting and Public Hearing; Presentation to Council; 27 members of the public spoke in support of *Greenways·Public Ways*; Council made decisions noted in Table 2
March 1993	Council endorses greenways implementation procedures as presented by staff
April 1993	M.Q. attends Council Budget meeting re Greenways
May 1993	CityPlan Ideas Fair; Task Force ideas presented to 10 000 fair visitors

neighbourhoods that work. These themes focused on reconnecting citizens to their public realm and to nature.

But a task force is expected to be a catalyst to action. The Essential Actions spanned all five themes and are listed in Table 2. The first Essential Action, which

Table 2
Essential Actions: Urban Landscape Task Force and Council responses

Essential Action proposed by Task Force	Action by Council
1. Adopt urban landscape principles: Recognize legacies; make connections; encourage innovation; care for and respect the environment; recognize diversity and balance; create a community; be fair and equitable; make informed decisions	Adopted subject to refinement over time
2. Establish the Vancouver Urban Greenway	Adopted in principle; staff instructed to report back by March 1993 on mechanisms for, and implications of, its implementation (Council decided to take no action on the establishment of a Greenways Trust, pending the assessment of public interest in the greenways concept through the CityPlan process)
3. Celebrate our legacies	Acknowledged the importance of existing legacy, celebration and festival programmes; included as an idea in the CityPlan public information and discussion materials
4. Prepare a public realm plan	Included in CityPlan discussions
5. Support the draft management plan for parks	Requested a report from the Park Board on its management plan and the implications of this plan for the City, particularly related to financing
6. Reclaim local streets for bicycles	Included in CityPlan discussions
7. Develop a street strategy	Included in CityPlan discussions
8. Undertake an Urban Landscape Inventory	Instructed the Director of Planning, in consultation with other departments, to report back by January 1993 on the form, uses, and desirability of an Urban Landscape Inventory and on the procedure and cost for constructing such an inventory
9. Prepare an ecological management plan	Included in CityPlan discussions
10. Promote the Urban Forest	Supported as consistent with other Council policies
11. Adopt ecological performance standards	Deferred pending planned reports from the Office for the Environment
12. Promote urban ecological literacy	Requested the B.C. Ministry of Education and the Vancouver School Board to consider and respond to the Task Force recommendations on urban ecological literacy
13. Cultivate the City of Gardens	Included in CityPlan discussions
14. Reinforce the City of Urban Villages	Included in CityPlan discussions
14. Create an urban landscape communication strategy	Supported in principle; ideas under consideration by various departments; did not merit motion

Council approved, was to adopt eight urban landscape principles for decision-making. The second Essential Action is to establish the Vancouver Urban Greenway. The Vancouver Urban Greenway is an umbrella name to include a network of public spaces and connections that would organize and structure our city. Fig. 2 shows the simple diagram of the Vancouver Urban Greenway's as proposed in the final report. The possible routes offer an incredible diversity of public life from the refined and truly hard urban to the rough and soft natural. The greenway–public way system would involve retrofitting streets, long-term planning to acquire missing links in the system, and generally thinking about current and future public connections.

Greenways and public ways are more than physical connections. They are the heart and minds of people—an urban attitude characterized by cohesion, pride, identity and community life.

The current bureaucratic structure of the City of Vancouver tends to view all interested parties as separated by status (citizen and bureaucrat), or by department (planning and engineering). Sometimes even arbitrary physical separations become significant determinants; for example, when the Parks Board and Planning are in different buildings across town. The Task Force stressed seeing the public realm as an integrated whole—not just our parks system or the street network. Of the 45% of Vancouver's land in the public realm,

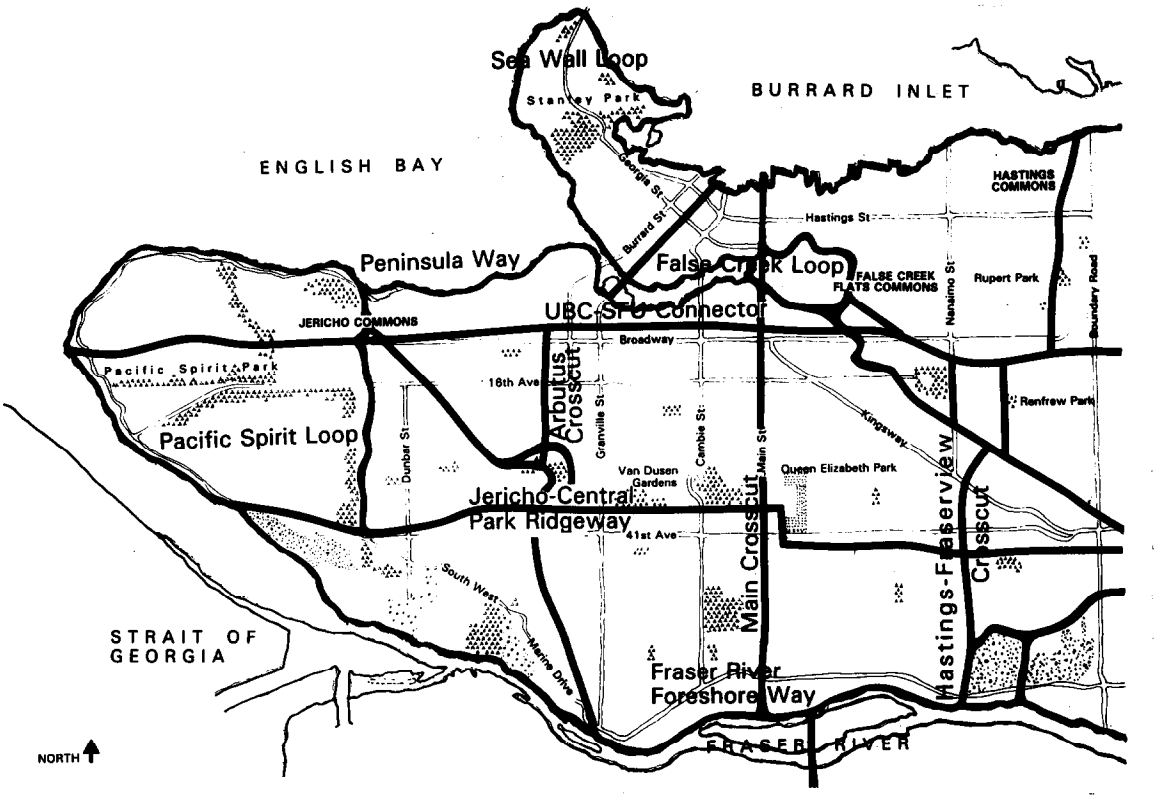

Fig. 2. Diagram of Vancouver Urban Greenway as proposed in *Greenways·Public Ways* report.

30% is streets and about 9% is parks—the rest of the public realm is school yards, cemeteries and miscellaneous space. The task of managing and creating a vision for the public realm therefore exceeds the mandate of any existing department, whether Parks Board, Engineering, Planning or School Board. To address shared concerns and create a diverse and interesting public realm, the second Essential Action also recommends a Greenway Trust to manage, plan and fund the public realm. This partnership includes city-hall staff as well as business people, neighbourhood representatives, interested individuals, and all levels of government.

Many people shared their ideas about specific activities or initiatives with the Task Force; their ideas are presented in a section of the report called "Gifts and tools" (see Table 3). These public ideas were intended as a continuing resource for the City and its communities for inspiration to improve the urban landscape. They represent the beginning of a collection of important public ideas (Paterson, 1992) (see Table 3).

The major work on the task force was accomplished in 4 months, from January to April 1992. The City Council publicly commented on *Greenways·Public Ways* in November 1992, at which time it (1) adopted the eight principles for decision-making, (2) asked staff to report back on ways to implement the Vancouver Urban Greenway (thus expressing its support of the idea), (3) asked staff to report back on strategies for making an urban landscape inventory, and (4) suggested inclusion of the Urban Landscape Task Force ideas in the CityPlan process. (CityPlan is an ambitious planning initiative in Vancouver. The programme uses the word "Plan" as a verb—intended as a process, not a product-oriented exercise. An Ideas Fair has taken place, which was the culmination of a citizens' "idea-a-thon" over several months through informal groups called City Circles. This 3 day "fair" exhibited all the ideas for the city and resulted in an Ideas Book. The next step is the "Choices" phase, which is orientated around a Futures Fair focused on finding agreement

Table 3
Gifts and tools

Gifts	Tools
The Vancouver Urban Laboratory	Heritage Landscapes
Vancouver–A Sustainable City?	Urban Street Life I and II
Civic and Sacred Places	Responsive Incremental Development
Linking Vancouver to the Sea and Sky	Neighbourhood Stories
Sensing Vancouver	Places for Information, Imagination, Participation
Festivals and Celebrations	Ecological Literacy in the Urban Landscape
Marking Time	Considering Nature in the City
City Nights	Measuring Ecological Health
Chalk Talk	Cleaning Up Urban Runoff
Urban Walks and Urban Races	History of a Block
City of Gardens	Citizen Forester
Playing on Common Ground	The Litigation Landscape
Green Architecture	Some Legal Tools for Protecting Land

Note: Gifts are ideas that make our urban experiences richer and city living more enjoyable. Tools are the mechanisms by which the urban landscape can be managed and cared for by citizens and public servants. For more information on gifts and tools, the report *Greenways · Public Ways* is available from the Vancouver City Planning Department, 453 West 12 th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5Y 1V4, for the cost of $12.

and setting directions for the future of Vancouver).

Interestingly, the Council did not agree to the establishment of a Greenways Trust at this first hearing. Councillors expressed concern that an arms-length trust may displace energies and result in isolation, unless there is more coordination among affected parties. As the Greenways Trust will be the engine for the greenways and public ways implementation, this is an area for continuing discussion and improvement of understanding.

The first response from staff on greenway–public way implementation was received in March 1993. A workshop was held in May 1993 to assist in designating criteria and establishing priorities. A report back to Council on the urban landscape inventory and greenways implementation occurred in September 1993. The Council approved the reallocation of one senior planner–landscape architect, one senior engineer and a planning technician to work full time on the inventory and on greenways implementation. Following pressure from the Urban Landscape Task Force, the Council requested that staff look at some "pilot projects" for implementation.

6. Why are public ideas so difficult to implement?

It is interesting to reflect on the Task Force process and the real difficulty of implementing public ideas in the political, economic and bureaucratic climate of the 1990s. Table 4 indicates a number of "road-blocks" to getting things done, and an example from the Task Force process where appropriate. Key blocks include: (1) the culture of conformity and compliance; (2) fear of change and the unknown; (3) visual, social and ecological literacy; (4) the lack of a sustainable vision for the city.

Implementing ideas in the city often requires hurdling, avoiding, and knocking down "road-blocks". The essence of developing as city-folk involves being able to experience more complex lives. Our difficulty in understanding each other and our city leads to our tendency to confuse the public and private. The result has been almost total fiscal and management neglect of the public realm. To correct this, public values must be clearly defined and understood.

7. Strategies to encourage positive groping along

What have we learned about implementing the idea of greenways and public ways in Vancouver? On reflection, a set of six strategies is proposed: (1) reviving citizenship; (2) building partnerships; (3) making big moves; (4) making small moves and trial offerings; (5) modelling after nature and beauty; (6) educating for community-based literacy. Based on the idea of

Table 4
'Road-blocks' to implementing public ideas with examples from *Greenways • Public Ways* process

'Road-block'	Description	Example
The culture of conformity and compliance	Public lethargy owing to separation and powerlessness No risk-taking or moving beyond accepted norm Distrust of own experience	In a public board's comments on the Task Force report we find the following: "With an attempt to indicate that all things may be possible, elements of the report are vulnerable to criticism as being too naive, simplistic or impractical. In some ways, the report is too idealistic and lacks context within the overall directions from the City and other levels of government"
Lost art of conversation	Communications technology not reciprocal–cannot talk back to television Our communicating skills about 'living' have diminished	Local cable television notwithstanding, the Task Force was frustrated in finding an appropriate medium to communicate with the different publics in the city. Although interest in urban affairs is growing, there is still a lack of 'city stories' in the media
Political or bureaucratic fear of change and the unknown	Territoriality within workplace and role protection Unwillingness to shift priorities and resources Lack of acceptance that it it 'no longer business as usual' Narrow focus eliminates options and buy-in	The idea of the Greenway Trust was threatening to the various departments which it may have affected. To quote an executive report: "while there may be a role for a continuing advisory committee on the urban landscape... Council should not delegate its decision-making responsibility to a special-purpose, single-interest body like the Trust... ultimate custody of urban landscape issues should rest with Council, which is elected and responsible for making difficult public choices." In terms of preparing a public realm plan, one opinion expressed was: "I support a public realm plan but feel we have the ability to deal with this within our existing system".
Lack of a sustainable vision for the city	Ideas presented are not imageable enough We do not really know our places, our cities	An executive report comments: "For reasons outlined earlier in this report, the preparation of a public-realm plan is not appropriately the responsibility of the Greenway Trust. It is, however, an idea that should be run up the CityPlan flag pole to see how many people salute and with how much vigour"
Public service overload	No emphasis on big picture, systems and interrelatedness Information overload–too many day-to-day problems leaves no energy for important bigger picture Emphasis on reactive not proactive mode	Six weeks following, an executive request for comments from the various City departments resulted in the following draft report to Council: "The City Engineer, Director of Planning, and Director of Social Planning have chosen not to comment, implying their complete agreement with the Urban Landscape Task Force recommendations and their ability to implement these recommendations as soon as possible"
Lost identity with public places	Different ethical systems cause confusion in values and allow us to ignore public realm A sense of lack of control leads to a lack of 'ownership', pride, and responsibility	In response to the idea of the City of Gardens, one department responded: "Veggie gardens are cutting off public domain and converting it to private use. In this the best user value to the public of $60 per square foot of land?"
Visual and ecological illiteracy	Education system generally ignores visual and ecological literacy	One bureaucrat wrote: "The other pervasive theme (in the report) is the now shopworn notions of creating urban wilderness and community vegetable gardens"
Participation overkill	Too many simultaneous public processes confused and exhausted public	One citizen remarked: "Isn't the Task Force the same as CityPlan– I don't get it!"
Lack of real examples	Sometimes planning and design ideas too abstract	A bureaucrat commented: "I can't visualize what you mean–don't we already have greenways in the streets we have beautified?"

implementation by groping along, these strategies are not articulated as specific actions. Instead, they are presented as concepts which, aired often enough in public conversations, will percolate into our thoughts and actions as citizens, politicians and bureaucrats.

7.1. Reviving citizenship

Often during the process, the Task Force reflected on the relatively low public involvement. At the time, this was attributed to "participation overkill" and the time and budget constraints. However, on reflection, participation seems likely to be correlated to the "lost art of conversation" about public ideas and to the practice of citizenship. Citizenship is the position or status of being an inhabitant of a city. People who respect the rights and privileges of citizenship quickly learn the advantages of more control of their lives and the place they live. Participation can be fun as well as beneficial and healthy for urban citizens. Strategies for teaching citizenry needs to be institutionalized into our education and public systems. Immigrants have citizenship courses; why not birth residents? We have charters of rights; why not charters of citizenship?

Barber (1984) advocates "strong democracy" and rebuilding the crumbling foundation before trying to remodel the house. He champions a series of processes which bring the citizen more to the forefront, such as a national system of neighbourhood assemblies, insistence on a national initiative and referendum process, the concept of electronic balloting to increase participation and a universal citizens' service.

In hindsight, it is apparent that the Urban Landscape Task Force was pioneering vocabulary building, about issues in the urban landscape, to give people the basic language skills to talk to one another. This education value cannot be overestimated. The process itself was an act of reviving citizenship. Fortunately, the CityPlan process has continued the public involvement in urban landscape ideas. However, at the end of CityPlan, people will expect results or they will lose faith in governance and in the processes they invested in so freely.

7.2. Building partnerships

Facing a bewildering spectrum of governments, many citizens feel separate from decisions that influence their lives. Vancouver has a tradition of top-down public participation. The costs of this type of process are too high in community frustration and taxpayer burden. Community, government and corporate partnerships are urgently required to overcome current fragmentation. Partnerships can be defined in many different ways, from land conservancies, to community land trusts, to local neighbourhood foundations.

For example, the idea of the Greenway Trust is one partnership model for funding, planning and managing the public realm. Greenways and public ways have been described as community catalysts (Cameron, 1993, p. 94). The Urban Landscape Task Force proposed the Greenway Trust as a city-wide model for coordinating public ideas. On reflection, community partnerships, initiated by neighbourhood- or community-scale greenway and public way ideas, are a better place to start. The excitement generated by the community greenway is perhaps the catalyst needed to begin the city-wide network.

The reticence of both the politicians and bureaucrats to embrace the idea of a partnership was disturbing. From the outside, it seemed to be the logical solution to many of the city's problems. However, based on the principle of groping along, perhaps the Task Force tried to be too specific about the Greenway Trust. Instead, the vision for partnerships could have been presented as a big idea, thereby letting managers grope along towards their own solutions.

7.3. Making big moves

Sometimes we need to be kickstarted with big moves. Vancouver boasts an "almost" continuous waterfront walkway around the city's edge. A vision is absolutely necessary to ensure that the big moves provide a public city structure; they can be achieved incrementally but require advance planning.

Big moves are probably the ones which incite most fear of change. One of the Task Force suggestions is to take back 30% of our streets over the next 20 years and repair the spaces for more diverse programmatic uses. In Europe we have examples of "woonerfs", in Vancouver we have Granville Island, a mixed-use neighbourhood where pedestrians and cars share the streets. Although "taking back the streets" would be accomplished incrementally, it still causes consternation on many fronts. However, if we examine the idea, like many others, it is not a change to something new. It is

really helping us discover who we were before the car took over. Big moves require a contextual understanding of their traditional background and proven workability.

Greenways·Public Ways tried to address both big and small moves. It also tried to address three audiences: the public, the bureaucrats and the politicians. One critique called the report a peculiar combination of the academic and the colloquial, although compliments have been received on its readability. Although the Task Force continually discussed audience focus, a solution to this dilemma did not materialize. In hindsight, perhaps the findings of the Task Force should have taken three forms: (1) a citizen's resource book of great city ideas; (2) a short and snappy summary of visions for busy politicians; (3) a set of big ideas written for bureaucrats to facilitate their groping along.

7.4. Making small moves and trial offerings

Change in urban landscape could be viewed much more positively with the assistance of trial offerings to help people feel comfortable with new ideas. Trial offerings are small projects which allow cities to test ideas and review results prior to committing to large-scale projects. Trial offerings at the city level could be classified vis-à-vis their duration (one car-free day per month), their ability to be manipulated (a neighbourhood park project with citizen control) or their appropriateness for monitoring (ecological health).

This idea of small moves can be translated to the development process (Alexander, 1987; Quayle et al., 1991) and to urban governance in general. The public policy literature suggests a history of incremental decisions reflected in "muddling", "groping" and "tinkering". Learning from these models, perhaps more consideration should be given to small moves in many civic activities such as setting a maximum size on urban lots to encourage incremental building-out of the city. One advantage of small moves is that if mistakes are made, they are small.

At an individual level, each one of us has a part in making public ideas happen: saying hello to people on the street or demanding our rights to the streets of your city. We should be guided by a sense that "one does what one can" and trust that our fellow citizens will do the same (Paehlke, 1989, p. 283).

7.5. Modelling after nature and beauty

Our current models for designing and planning cities are being proven faulty. What would it be like to model our decisions using nature as a model for the design of both physical and economic systems? There are a growing number of proponents who see the world as a "vast repository of...biological strategies" for guiding our decisions (Orr, 1992, p. 33). There is, however, disagreement on the use of the model: do we restore natural systems authentically or imitate their structure and processes (Todd and Todd, 1984)?

We also note a reluctance to use the word "nature" in our political or bureaucratic deliberations. By now, the word environment has lost any clear meaning. "Why don't we speak about nature? It seems such an egocentric and technocentric approach to consider everything in the world in reference to ourselves" (Franklin, 1990, p. 87). Our hesitancy to employ "nature" shows how much we have grown apart from it (Bookchin, 1990).

Beauty and pleasure and joy also need to play a much larger part in our decision-making. Sometimes we are too downright serious. If we took the attitude that every decision made in the Council chambers across North America had to contribute to the beauty of the world and to the pleasure of humans, we might see and experience different urban places. The more pragmatic amongst us might react violently to this "naive" suggestion. However, we continue to underestimate the power of the beautiful to influence our mental health and ultimately our attitude to making both small and large decisions.

7.6. Educating for community-based literacy

New ideas must be received, considered, applied, and finally, understood. To increase the acceptance of any idea, it helps to identify the parallel gains that are felt by politicians, bureaucrats and the different community-based groups. Recognizing that these groups often speak different languages and require a different product directs our attention to literacy, education and communication. There are many different types of literacy—numerical, verbal, visual, social, community and ecological. Ecological literacy, according to Garrett Hardin, is the ability to ask "What then?" (Orr, 1992, p. 85). The initiative behind the Task Force is

based on a concern about ecological literacy. As more people live and work in our region, we have to ask "What then?" regarding our urban ecosystem. "The failure to develop ecological literacy is a sin of omission and of commission. Not only are we failing to teach the basics about the earth and how it works, but we are in fact teaching a large amount of stuff that is simply wrong. By failing to include ecological perspectives in any number of subjects, students are taught that ecology is unimportant for history, politics, economics, society and so forth. And through television they learn that the earth is theirs for the taking. The result is a generation of ecological yahoos" (Orr, 1992, pp. 83–84).

To many of us the need for ecological literacy is obvious, but the identification of benefits to other groups requires a marketing and media strategy which explains the public ideas in the fullest and most accurate way. The Task Force made a concerted effort to contact the press and local radio and television. Our experience was that the media "marches to its own drummer"; however, if the public ideas are clear, with visual examples, they will eventually sell themselves.

8. Conclusion: building a constitutency

In conclusion, an idea needs a champion and broad support to make it work. The building of a constituency is the most important process in the implementation of public ideas. This constituency must be at all levels—citizens, decision makers, policy-writers and the media.

The Urban Landscape Task Force was fortunate in being a special project initiated by Mayor Campbell and supported by members of both Council and staff. However, many people are obstructionist, knowingly or not, perhaps owing to lack of understanding. Interestingly, this obstructionist group includes people who see themselves as major supporters of greenways and public ways but who lack the skills to work constructively to a common goal.

Ideas must be "owned" to be effectively implemented. The Task Force made special efforts to listen to city staff, yet in the final analysis many of them did not feel the necessary ownership to read the report, never mind move towards implementing the ideas. Follow-through with city staff is proving critical, well after the formal Task Force mandate is complete. Finally, the importance of community connections cannot be over-stressed.

Implementing public ideas is not easy. From the seed crystal of the Urban Landscape Task Force report, the process of education and work continues. The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and federal government granting agencies are being approached to help build constituency through case studies on greenway and public way implmentation and community "how-to" books. New elections mean new decision-makers to help. However, the process of the Urban Landscape Task Force has confirmed Thomas Jefferson's insights: "There is no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion" (Thomas Jefferson, letter to William Charles Jarvis, 28 September 1820)

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